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## Anthropological Epilogue

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*Phil. Trans. R. Soc. Lond. B* 1966 **251**, 521-522

doi: 10.1098/rstb.1966.0046

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## Anthropological epilogue

BY V. W. TURNER

The anthropological participants agreed that if there is to be a fruitful dialogue on ritualization between the ethologists and other behavioural scientists it will be necessary to have detailed discussions of examples of empirical work produced by each of them. What is required is a protracted series of meetings between a restricted number of representatives of those disciplines interested in 'ritualization' (and anthropologists feel that premature closure on the definitional problem should be avoided) who could examine concrete data on human and animal behaviour that is 'stereotyped', 'regular', 'periodic', 'repetitive', 'patterned', etc., and in each species relate such behaviour to behaviour that is 'flexible', 'plastic', 'labile', etc. 'Ritualized' and 'non-ritualized' behaviour should also be investigated in their total situational contexts, ecological, social and, in the case of man, ideological. Synchronic studies of this type should be coupled with developmental and dynamic studies for each life-form discussed. In these ways better communication would be achieved between interested scientists than is possible from the formal interchange of prepared papers. Comparisons could then be made which might eventually contribute to the study of the *evolution* of behaviour patterns.

Already it is clear, from the Conference papers, that there might be common discourse between anthropologists and ethologists in relation to several topics. Dr Leach, for example, has mentioned to me that the ethologists might be able to show that in *Homo sapiens* symbolic gestures by means of body movements are selectively adaptive. The significance of such movements varies widely from one culture to another yet the types of movements used belong to a limited repertoire—hand-pointing, head-shaking, bowing, nodding, body-swaying, etc.—shared by all mankind. He has also pointed out that the ethological studies of the inhibition of intra-specific aggression through adaptive ritualization may throw light on the almost universal fact that in human culture homicide is never taken lightly but is hedged in by taboos, jural ceremonial rules and religious rites, beliefs and conventions. In my own view the ethological concept of 'displacement activities'—when they become adapted as social releasers—in situations where strongly activated but antagonistic drives, feelings, interests or principles are likely to be in conflict, has an important bearing on those structural properties of religious symbols I have called 'multivocality' and 'polarity'. Here the same ritual symbol may represent many things simultaneously, and furthermore, several conflicting things. It seems to operate both as a binder of potentially disruptive forces, and as an emblem of a unity that transcends or comprehends sectional or selfish interests and aspirations. Other areas of mutual interest would seem to be represented by studies of the relationship between human speech (a phenomenon of ritualization which developed in man many millennia ago) and animal vocalizations, and of the social and ecological contexts of the vocalizations of man's closest congeners.

Finally, it would I think be worth while exploring why it is that non-human 'ritualized' behaviour tends to occur most frequently in dyadic or triadic social situations, while many

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forms of human 'ritual' or 'ceremonial' behaviour involve large groups of participants. It may be that here the use of culturally selected or designed objects and artifacts as symbols (replacing inherited patterns of behaviour) each of which men learn slowly to regard as sacred epitomes of whole sectors of cultural and social experience, has major organizational importance and has given man an adaptive advantage over less well bonded competitors.